

**African American Elders Project Transition
Pros and Cons of the AAEP Transition
AAEP Steering Committee
2003-2004**

The AAEP was established in 1997. It is managed by a partnership that included the Human Services Department, Aging and Disability Services (ADS), Public Health: Seattle and King County, Senior Services and the Mayor's Council on African American Elders. In 2003, the partnership initiated a project to transition the AAEP to a community-based management and governance structure.

At its October 29th meeting, the AAEP Transition Steering Committee brainstormed the question: What are the pros and cons of transitioning the AAEP to a community-based management and governance structure? This session was followed by other sessions to discuss and refine the responses to the question.

Members of the partnership and the Steering Committee will use the results of this brainstorm and dialogue to formulate responses to individuals and organizations that support the project as well as those that are skeptical. The results will also be used in updating services for the AAEP as well as developing administrative requirements for the nonprofit entity.

Following is result the Committee's deliberations.

**What are the "pros" of transitioning the AAEP to a community-based?
management and governance Structure?**

Political Advantage – The political process provides opportunities for support for the project. The project has its support among local elected officials as well as community leaders. That support will likely increase if the project is in a community-based setting.

Increased Visibility – Placing the project in a community setting will increase its visibility and its ability to market its services to clients that are closely. It will be more assessable by the clients and the community at large.

Community Support and Ownership – **Community** ownership of the project is very likely to increase if the project is placed in closer proximity to clients and the African American community. Offering culturally specific services will increase community ownership. Greater community ownership may increase the level of advocacy for the project and the services.

Increased Collaboration and Coordination – As a nonprofit organization in a community-based setting, the project is in a better position to collaborate and coordinate with other service providers and other organizations providing complimentary services.

Community Empowerment- The City of Seattle has a history of empowering communities by funding programs and activities in community-based settings and of supporting management and leadership of programs by representatives of the community being served. This effort is similar to past approaches with Asian and Hispanic communities in Seattle.

Increased Services for Older Clients – A community-based governance and management structure will lead to an increase in the number of 60 year and older clients because they will have easier access to services and providers will have easier access to them. In addition, increasing support from the community will increase the level of trust of the provider leading to increase use of services by seniors.

Nursing Services – When services are located and provided in the community being served, there is a greater interfacing and connection with the community and clients. Nurses have greater access to doctors, community clinics, hospitals and other health care providers.

Increases Grant and Community Funding – As a nonprofit organization, the AAEP would be eligible for more foundation grants and other funding than the City of Seattle. In addition, a nonprofit organization can be more flexible in collaborating with state and local agencies and foundations on services for the elderly.

A More Flexible Organizational Structure – The current organization structure of the AAEP features a partnership of three organizations. This arrangement reduces the efficiency of the organization by increasing the time and effort required to make decisions. In addition, the current structure has made it difficult for the project to evolve as the environment and needs of the African American frail elderly have changed. As a nonprofit, the AAEP would have one lead organization and a smaller leadership group. These features could be expected to increase the project's flexibility, collaboration and momentum.

Developing A National Model – The current project has important unique features for serving the African American frail elderly such as the focus on keeping frail elders in their home as long as possible. These features are more likely to be developed into a National model if it is managed and governed by a community-based nonprofit organization. As a nonprofit, the program will have access to funding and support from federal agencies and large and small foundations that work with elders.

What are the “cons” of transitioning the AAEP to a community-based? management and governance structure?

Politics – Many interests may be peaked and impacted by a transition of the AAEP. As those interests become clearly defined, individuals and/or organizations may seek to achieve their individual goals through political maneuvers. If not contained, those moves could break the whole project.

Funding, Financing and Fiscal Management – Uncertainty and inadequate financing, fiscal accountability and budget support could undermine the effort. Is the project being set up to fail?

Creating New Nonprofits – Governmental, civic and nonprofit leaders have expressed concern about the impact of creating more nonprofit organizations. Some have stated publicly that more organizations will significantly increase stress on resources currently available for nonprofit service organizations funded by local government.

Duplication of Services – Concern has been expressed about creating another nonprofit that will duplicate services already being provided by existing organizations.

Nursing Shortage – There is a nursing shortage across the country and in Seattle. The shortage is more severe for African American Nurses. The Partnership's effort to recruit an African American Nurse has been unsuccessful so far. It may be difficult to recruit and retain nurses for the project as it is now organized.

Quality Control – Establishing strategies to ensure the quality of program services and program administration will take time to fully develop and implement.

A New Entity – There are questions about how a new entity will respond to the demands and requirements to provide services for the target population of the project. There are state and federal standards for services that must be met

Existing Organizations – It may be difficult finding an existing organization with the flexibility to take a project such as the AAEP. So many of them are limited by current funding sources and funding requirements.

Fear – Change and loss are scary. It will be difficult to measure and control the psychological affect of the transition of the AAEP on all stakeholders. The transition could be costly in terms of support for and commitment to the project and the quality of services provided during the transition and after.

Risk Management – Risk management is about determining liability and ways to reduce and control it. Determining liability and developing strategies to manage it will be a challenge during and after the transition.